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THE SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

QUEBEC

STATEMENT OF THE LSA-LSO

LIBRE

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VIVE LE QUEBEC LIBRE: (English version of 1968 Convention resolution entitled “Vers la Libération du Québec”)

Introduction

No political or social issue has aroused such interest and concern from coast to coast as Quebec. Every tendency is compelled to take a stand as to whether there is a French-Canadian question, as distinct from an Italian or Ukrainian-Canadian question, and if so, what is its nature and what is the solution.

The following is the socialist viewpoint. It is the resolution adopted by the delegates to the July 1, 1968 weekend convention of the League for Socialist Action/Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière.

The convention was held on the eve of Dominion (Confederation) Day, only a week after “Bludgeon Monday,” the day of the police assault on the independentists who responded to Prime Minister Trudeau's provocative appearance at Quebec's national holiday, St-Jean Baptiste Day. Permeating its sessions was a profound spirit of identity with the Québécois struggle and that of the French student and revolutionary forces who led the great May upsurge in the direction of a socialist France.

The resolution was the culmination of an intense discussion that had been unfolding both in previous conventions and in the internal life of the LSA/LSO over the past four years. It was adopted unanimously by the delegates from Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, who united in convention, as in day to day struggle, in a common organization, the League for Socialist Action/Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière.

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VIVE LE QUÉBEC LIBRE

"Let us be frank. What is at stake, for me, is nothing less than the survival of Canada."

So said Lester Pearson, then prime minister of the country. The head of state was once again commenting on a fact widely recognized in Canada: after more than 100 years of confederation, there is growing discontent in this country, of such a profound character that it threatens the survival of the established order. Mr. Pearson could not but recognize the main source of this discontent, and the justice of its claims: "There is no one here who does not know that French Canada is presently deeply dissatisfied with its place in confederation. There are complex reasons for that, of varying importance. . . Most of these reasons are well-founded."

The depth of this discontent was dramatically revealed in the 1967 visit of France's president de Gaulle to Quebec, where his demagogic cry "Vive le Québec Libre" evoked a massive and enthusiastic response from the Québécois, provoking a sharp hostile reaction from the federal

government, which in turn deeply shocked French Canada. French-speaking Québécois did not welcome de Gaulle as a liberator. Their response was a demonstration of identification with the *francophonie*, the French-speaking world, and of expectation that his actions would rebuff the Ottawa government. More precisely, it showed the depth of their consciousness of their national oppression, and their growing desire to achieve a free Quebec.

The French Canadian population of Canada constitutes an oppressed nation within confederation. Its character as a nation is revealed by its possession of a distinct language, culture and history of its own, and above all by its well-defined national consciousness. This consciousness is heightened by the fact that the French Canadian people are concentrated in one area, Quebec, where they constitute an immense majority, and have developed deep cultural roots and forms of cultural, social and political expression. French Canadian national communities can also be found in every province of Canada, constituting a majority of the population in large areas adjacent to Quebec.

The standard of living of the average Québécois reveals the oppressed position of this nation within the Canadian context. His per capita income is only two-thirds of the Canadian average. The rate of unemployment is higher than the Canadian average, sometimes higher even than in the Maritimes, a seriously depressed area. The Quebec rate is double the Ontario rate. In cities of mixed English and French-speaking peoples, it is the latter who live in the most depressed areas. As for the education of French Canadians, dominated by the church and deprived of adequate funds, it is generally recognized as inferior to the education of English-speaking Quebec. The public education system is designed to provide a low-skilled and unskilled and thus a lowly paid work force for industry and the service trades while the *collegès classiques* provide a limited access to the professions.

Subordination of French Language

Yet the most profoundly felt form of the national oppression of the Québécois is the status of their language. The majority of Montrealers can live only with difficulty in their mother tongue in this city, the leading urban center of the nation. English domination has pressed the French language into a completely subordinate position in daily life and poses a strong corrupting force against the French language and culture, while outside Quebec, French Canadians are denied the most elementary language rights even where they constitute a majority. Even the federal government, for all its tokenist concessions, functions in English. Only a feeble minority of the leaders of the government and civil service are French-speaking or effectively bilingual. All important meetings in Ottawa are conducted in English. Discrimination against the French language is most marked on the job, where the ability to work in English is usually a condition of promotion, and often even of employment.

A strong national consciousness has arisen from this condition of national oppression: a self-identification as Québécois, an awareness and resentment of English oppression, and often of the "Uncle Tom" role of French leaders of church, industry and government. For some period after the defeat of the 1837 uprising and the consummation of confederation, the church and other reactionary institutions of Quebec life were the leaders and spokesmen for the French-Canadian people. The development of industry in Quebec, owned and controlled by English-speaking capital, heightened national consciousness. But it also produced a working class preponderant in numbers alone in Quebec society.

The independent dynamic of Québécois nationalism has been more and more clearly seen, as it has broken out of the control of the national bourgeois who have shown their incapacity to defend, let alone extend the national interests of French Canada. Québécois nationalism today presents a formidable challenge to the rulers of Ottawa and Washington, of Bay and St. James Streets and Wall Street, and is a fundamentally progressive force which, as it moves forward, brings Quebec workers into conflict with the entire capitalist order, including the relatively small French Canadian bourgeoisie.

National consciousness has given new dimensions to the class struggle which is developing on a wider scale at all levels of Quebec society today.

The student is made more strongly aware of the limitation of his perspective in Quebec society by the discrimination he must face as a French Canadian in a society dominated by Anglo-American capitalism. The petty-bourgeois can have fewer illusions about his possibilities for advancement. Most of all, the worker's struggle is heightened by the fact that the boss is English-speaking and that his exploitation is redoubled because of his nationality.

The Quebec workers share the problems of their English-Canadian brothers—of inflation, unemployment, “speed-up”, insecurity of employment, anti-labor legislation — and struggle against the same enemy, ensconced both in the corporation boardrooms and the state councils. But if the English-speaking worker is held back by illusions as to the nature of the system and his exploitation, the French-speaking worker is more conscious of his exploitation and less inhibited in his reactions. Everywhere he looks there are forces trying to crush his identity as a French Canadian. At work he must speak the boss's language — English. His children are victims of inferior education, while his culture and language deteriorate under the pressure of English domination. He is doubly oppressed — as a worker and as a Québécois. The national oppression of Quebec workers gives their struggle a militancy and a revolutionary dynamic which assures that the workers of Quebec will play a vanguard role in the socialist transformation of Canada.

One of the most notable features of the recent history of Canada is the rise of the French Canadian working class which has demonstrated an unparalleled will to struggle, an unparalleled solidarity and an unparalleled holding power. In pan-Canadian union struggles, the Québécois have consistently been in the vanguard of the struggle. Quebec leads in the pan-Canadian labor struggles in terms of the duration of strikes, the number of workers involved and their militancy. Wide layers of white collar workers are entering the working class movement — Montreal is the site of the first successful organizational drive among bank workers.

Some of Quebec labor's biggest and most successful struggles have been waged by public employees in an area where a strike represents not just a challenge to a boss but a confrontation with the state power. The Quebec government's enactment of far-reaching anti-labor laws and its smashing of public employees' strikes through "emergency laws" has failed to break the momentum of the struggle. It is above all the militancy and strength demonstrated by the Quebec workers that has wrought such profound changes on other layers of society, impressed the students and the poor farmers by its achievements and profoundly changed the face of that society.

Just as the Quebec working class is in the vanguard of the pan-Canadian labor movement, the Quebec students are in the vanguard of the pan-Canadian student movement. In addition to all the factors that have impelled students across the world to challenge the status quo, for Quebec

students there is also the deep sense of frustration and injustice that flows from the discrimination against them as French Canadians. They know that the educational system does not prepare them to play the role in society to which they aspire. But even those who feel themselves to be prepared find upon graduation that there are few opportunities open to them. The big corporations that dominate the economy maintain little professional staff and do little or no research at the Canadian end of their operations —and where they do the posts go to *les anglais*.

The student movement, composed largely of youth drawn from the lower middle class, has clearly identified itself with the most dynamic force in the struggle against national oppression — the working class movement. Quebec students have withdrawn from the more conservative Canadian Union of Students to form their own organization, the Union Générale des Étudiants du Québec (UGEQ), which relates the students' position to that of the workers and poor farmers and which actually considers itself to be part of the trade union movement, in fact a radical wing of it. UGEQ actively supports strikes and organizes giant demonstrations on other issues such as Vietnam. Recently French-speaking university students from several cities (Montreal, Moncton) mobilized *en masse* with the aim of winning reforms in teaching and school fees. An important area where the young university intellectuals have found an expression for their sense of injustice is in the trade union movement, where they have joined organizing staffs and played a leading role in the vast wave of struggles that have stirred Quebec over the past decade.

Dominated by Foreign Capital

The farmers, too, pushed to the wall by the widening gap between the prices they obtain for their product and the high cost of equipment and materials required for their operations, have undergone a process of sharp social differentiation. The vast majority, who are quite poor, are organized in a central organization (*centrale*) — the Union Catholique des Cultivateurs (UCC). It too has linked itself closely to the working class movement. In recent years these farmers have marched by the thousands on Ottawa and Quebec to advance their demands.

The source of the national oppression of French Canada is the domination of its economy by foreign capital—English Canadian, U.S. and European. Some 80 to 90 percent of Quebec workers are employed by English-speaking capital. In the key Montreal area 80 percent of the wealth of local companies is in the hands of English-speaking capital interests. According to John Porter's analysis of Canada's "economic elite," only one-sixteenth is French-Canadian, and apart from two small Quebec banks they base their power almost entirely on English- controlled corporations.

In many ways Quebec conforms to the classic norms of a colony. It is controlled economically by foreign capital and politically through the Ottawa regime. The economic effect of this imperialist control can be seen in the distortion of the economy — the heavy concentration on extractive industries and cheap labor industries, and the minimal allocation of funds for, and the consequent backwardness of, such basic services as health and education.

The subjection of the French Canadian nation has facilitated the creation of a pool of cheap labor and of unemployment, and the division of the working class of Quebec along national lines. (The English-speaking workers constitute an important sector of the population all the more in that it is concentrated in Montreal.)

The prevalence, the domination of the English language on the job reflects the self interest of the English-speaking monopolists, who would only increase their costs by employing the French language, and have therefore promoted English as the language of business and work. It also reflects the arrogance of *les monopolistes*, bloated with self importance, permeated with class arrogance and contemptuous of those whom they overlord. Their contempt for every aspect of the culture of the conquered is a form of justification of their conquest and oppression.

Capitalism while it has nowhere given up its economic interests without a terrible struggle, is capable under pressure of granting concessions which would alleviate and tend to eliminate language discrimination. But the Anglo-American monopolists have a massive economic stake in Quebec and it is in the operation and extension of their class interests that the national oppression of the Québécois is rooted. This oppression will be eliminated only through a mass mobilization of the Québécois against the fundamental cause of this injustice—Anglo-American capitalism and its political agents and collaborators in Ottawa and in Quebec.

Nothing can be expected from the French Canadian capitalist class in the struggle to make the Québécois *maîtres chez eux* (masters in their own house). The Quebec national bourgeoisie stands today in a position of extreme weakness and in close alliance with English Canadian and U.S. capital. Confederation provided English capital with the political framework to carry out the basic industrialization of Canada. The stripping of the public treasury, so important to the establishment of capitalism in this country, was carried out by English capital for its own profit. Through its tariff and foreign trade policy, and through gifts of exploitation rights for the resources of the country, the federal government cleared the road for English-speaking capital. Ottawa's immigration and education policies deprived the French-speaking population outside Quebec of its language rights. It restricted the rights of the French community to a single province, intending to drown French Canada in the English-speaking majority.

The French Canadian bourgeoisie lacked the strength to contest English capital's stranglehold on the Quebec economy. Instead, it resigned itself to the role of subservient collaborator of English-speaking capital. Together with the clergy it cooperated with the invader and aided this economic invasion, while isolating the Québécois from the rest of the continent with its promotion of a reactionary, clerical and rustic nationalism.

Behind Today's Nationalist Parties

Today the economic base of the French-speaking bourgeoisie is extremely weak. What power it has is closely tied to that of English Canadian and U.S. capital. Within the framework established by the English-speaking bourgeoisie it maneuvers to win special privileges, but confronted by the mounting struggle of the working class it cannot and does not attempt a change in the basic relationship of forces.

The weakness of the national bourgeoisie has enabled the petty-bourgeoisie in Quebec to play on occasion an unusually prominent social role. In the past, it has been the chief spokesman for Quebec nationalism. It has provided the major base of support of the provincial parties, and wielded great influence through provincial governments. On several occasions it has brought forth new nationalist formations such as the Bloc Populaire and the present separatist parties. Yet its record and its prospects for advancing the national struggle are very meager.

Quebec provincial governments have engaged in many disputes with the federal government to win marginal concessions for the Quebec petty-bourgeoisie and the French Canadian nation, within the overall framework of confederation and continued Anglo-American domination. Since the end of the Duplessis era, they have made many moves to strengthen the power of the Quebec government, modernize its structure, and use its power to promote the interests of the French-speaking petty-bourgeoisie and French-speaking capital. On many questions, it has raised legitimate national demands, such as the right of Quebec to an independent role in foreign affairs.

Whatever its episodic victories, the overall record shows the great weakness of the provincial government, and of the petty-bourgeois nationalism which has provided the main driving force in these contests. Ambitious economic projects to round out Quebec's economy and to provide the base for modernization, have been stalemated. The government can survive only on the sufferance of big capital, and even then suffers chronic financial problems. Unwilling to press matters to a showdown with Ottawa and the monopolies, it has been unable to rally deep-going popular support, caught as it is in the crossfire of the class struggle, and forced to move out more and more harshly against the working class as this struggle has advanced.

The present debate over constitutional reforms will result in no substantial solutions to the pressing problems of the daily life of the working people. The chief protagonists of these constitutionalist reforms have no concept of mobilizing effective forces, let alone changing the relationship of class forces. In the last analysis, a constitution is only a reflection of this real class relationship and no serious changes, constitutionally or otherwise, will take place until a mass movement has challenged the power of the great monopolies which control Quebec. Both the Union Nationale and Liberal governments of Quebec have faced the same dilemma: to protect the interests of big capital on which they ultimately rest, they must move out more and more openly against the struggles of the exploited classes. Thus they exhaust any potential for carrying a serious struggle for equality for the French Canadian nation.

Three new nationalist parties have seen the light of day in recent years of which two, the Rassemblement pour l'Indépendance Nationale (RIN—Assembly for National Independence) and the Mouvement Souveraineté-Association (MSA—Movement for Sovereignty-Association) have considerable appeal to militants among students and intellectuals and in the working class. These parties, different in origin and many aspects of program, are both petty-bourgeois in their social base and their program. Their aim is to build a united movement of all social classes, with the goal of national independence (through separation, or sovereignty and subsequent association with English Canada), in which framework social reforms could then be achieved. Their program on the national question does not go much beyond formal independence — the RIN states it will welcome U.S. capital investment while the MSA advocates economic union with English Canada and thus with the English-speaking monopolies. Neither proposes to challenge the power of the monopolies. Their social program offers little to the exploited classes of Quebec.

Given the continued absence of a labor party, these parties would attract some working class support. Yet they are fundamentally the political image of their class. Unable to develop a program genuinely independent of the capitalist class, unable to carry a real struggle against the monopolies, unable to develop a social program to meet the needs of the working class, they are fated to be shoved aside by the developing class struggle in Quebec.

Québécois Workers Hold Key to Future

In the classical colonial or semi-colonial countries, the class differentiation within the national movement and the rise of the working class to the leading role necessary to carry the bourgeois democratic revolution through to the end via the socialist revolution is usually established only after a series of complex struggles and at a late stage in the process. Quebec however is distinguished from the classical colony by the fact that it is an industrialized area where the farmers, though impoverished, own their own land and constitute only a small part of the population, and the class antagonisms characteristic of capitalism dominate social relations, with the working class a developed, independent and powerful force.

In Quebec not only is the national bourgeoisie closely allied with and dependent upon Anglo-American capital, but the "national" government is an open instrument of the monopolies in battling the labor movement. The Quebec working class comprises the overwhelming majority of the population, and is organized along economic lines in trade unions over 600,000 strong ranged against both Anglo-American and Quebec capitalist interests. It is already beginning to move along the lines of independent political action against these interests which are organized as a class in control of state power.

A parallel polarization around the Quebec question is beginning to shape up in English Canada. While the bourgeois parties are implacable in their opposition to the national demands of Quebec, it is the New Democratic Party which has moved towards support of the national struggle, endorsing and campaigning for the concept of special status for Quebec. If this has not been defined to incorporate the full right of self-determination, it encompasses the concept that it is the people of Quebec who must determine the special relationship they desire with English Canada.

The struggle to establish the national rights of the Québécois is shaping up as a class struggle for political power, headed up by the working class. Only a mobilization of the workers and their allies against the present system, against capitalism, the real cause of the injustices, can open the road to the national liberation of French Canada. This will have to be done against the tenacious resistance of the capitalist class, French and Anglo-American.

The militancy displayed by the working class and its allies in the Quebec class struggle shows the depth of class and national injustice in Quebec, and how sharply this injustice is felt by the Quebec people. The only road to remove the source of this injustice is a socialist revolution, through which the workers of Quebec will gain control over the political and economic structure of the country.

The great task of the working class is to replace the governments of the Lesages and Johnsons with a workers' and farmers' government, expressing the needs of the exploited classes of Quebec, which can eliminate the source of national and class injustice by destroying the capitalist order in Quebec, by taking over control and ownership of the great foreign monopolies which presently have a stranglehold on Quebec society, and establishing the real independence of Quebec from all foreign domination.

With the nationalization of the monopolies which presently control the economy and lives of the Québécois, the utilization of Quebec's great productive resources will be harnessed to the needs of the working people, and Quebec will rapidly overcome the backwardness forced upon it by

imperialism. Socialist planning will take place through the democratic management of the workers themselves, on the shop level, and in the working out of the overall economic plan.

With a workers government, where the masses will be in full control, the concept of self-determination of the Quebec people as a sovereign nation will come to its full fruition. It will reverse the present tendency towards inundation of the French culture by establishing French as the sole official language. It will utilize the already great wealth of the economy to promote and assist the development of French culture and language, making available in French all the technical material, etc., required for the many-sided development of technology and culture, and ensuring the development of close cultural links with the French-speaking world.

By eliminating the exploitation of Quebec by foreign capital, and the social system that feeds on the poverty, unemployment and discrimination, the socialist revolution will remove the root causes of national oppression. It will establish once and for all the sovereignty of the French-Canadian people and their independence from any form of foreign domination, and thus open the door to real equality in the relationships between French and English Canada. The Quebec people will then be free to establish the relationships they desire with surrounding peoples, and will undoubtedly seek and establish an association with them in a United Socialist States of North America.

Is Separation the Answer?

French Canada has the historic right to determine freely its relationship with English Canada, including the right to separate if it so desires. Revolutionary socialists defend this right to self-determination. But it is not enough to take this basic democratic position; revolutionary socialists take a stand on how it should be implemented, from the standpoint of what will best advance the struggle of the working class at any given period.

Would it advance the overall struggle to adopt the program of separation of Quebec from English Canada? It is striking that despite the existence for several years now of an articulate movement for political independence, with the resources to make its viewpoint known, workers have shown little interest in it and given it no real support. No tendency of the labor movement has adopted an independentist program. The response to the independentist appeals has been largely limited to the rootless intellectuals, to the petty-bourgeois, who see no other vehicle for ending Quebec's national oppression, rather than to labor, whose powerful forces are already in struggle against the Anglo-American monopolies on a more extensive scale.

Is there such a gap in the level and direction of the class struggle in Quebec and in English Canada that the workers struggle could be advanced by orienting to political independence from English Canada? For the Québécois labor and nationalist movement, as for Canadian labor outside Quebec, the enemy is in Ottawa. The enemy is the federal state whose power stands behind national and class domination in Quebec. Why would a class that understands this fail to take into account that the Canadian working class outside Quebec is organized on a massive scale against Ottawa, both on the trade union level and politically through the NDP? The forces of labor are even a step ahead in the rest of Canada, in one respect – they have a powerful political arm, the NDP, which in general identifies itself with the cause of French Canada and has already succeeded in establishing itself as a force in Quebec. The strong roots of the NDP in Quebec and the association of the majority of the organized working class in Quebec with the Canadian Labor

Congress provide evidence of Quebec labor's awareness of the great benefits to be gained for its struggle by allying itself with the organized forces of the English Canadian working class, in a common struggle against the federal state.

The political independence of French Canada stands as an historic alternative, which cannot be approved or rejected except in terms of given social conditions at a given time. At this time, there are no grounds to believe that the working class, by adopting the program of political independence, would advance its interests in any way, in terms either of its present class consciousness or of its ultimate objective of defeating the power of the monopolies politically buttressed by the Ottawa regime.

Despite its rapid growth and demonstrated strength, the Quebec labor movement finds itself today in a serious impasse. A number of major strikes have been turned back or defeated by provincial government back-to-work emergency laws, with the bipartisan support of the Liberal and Union Nationale parties. Damaging anti-labor laws have been written into the statute books. The achievement of the most basic social goals of the labor movement, of a durable and meaningful improvement in the standard of living of Quebec workers, of significant moves against Quebec's national oppression, is totally blocked by the political monopoly of the Liberals and the Union Nationale, committed to the defense of capitalist interests against all challenges.

The dilemma of the labor movement stands in striking contradiction to its repeatedly proven power and will to struggle, and to the breadth of its influence and the support it has rallied in other key sectors of society. Many fundamental criticisms must be made of the policies of the union leaderships, but we must recognize that the Quebec union leadership, while it varies in character according to the union in question, plays on the whole a more positive role than elsewhere in Canada — more energetic, more open to rank and file pressure, less mired in bureaucratic privilege and bureaucratic methods of operation. It has repeatedly opened the door to militant and effective class action on the trade union level. Nor can the fault be laid to union structure. In fact the record of internecine conflicts and raiding within the labor movement is now tending to be overcome by serious moves on the part of both the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CNTU) and Quebec Federation of Labor (QFL) to bridge the division.

Developing Movement for Labor Party

Rather the great problem has been the failure so far of the QFL and particularly the CNTU to undertake independent labor political action, to present an alternative to the anti-labor regimes of Lesage and Johnson. They have attempted to win concessions through lobbying, through pressuring the existing regimes, only to see both governments move to an overtly anti-labor position. If the labor leadership has held back in the past from political action through its illusions about the character of these parties and the lack of confidence in the strength of its own movement, the general motion towards a labor party is now becoming clear. The QFL, which has endorsed the NDP federally since its foundation, passed a proposal at its last congress calling for a conference to discuss the creation of this party. A strong political base for the party already exists in the New Democratic Party, which has achieved a substantial vote across the province in recent federal elections. The basis for the NDP's refusal to enter the provincial arena has been considerably undercut by Levesque's exit from the Liberal party, which has seriously undermined many illusions about the provincial Liberals, including many held in the CNTU leadership. It is highly significant that the CNTU Montreal Council endorsed the NDP in the 1968 federal election, for the first time in its history.

The projected party could well in fact be formed as a constituent part of the NDP. Whatever the case, it would naturally develop close fraternal ties with the NDP, while retaining general autonomy in its own structures and policies, and possibly developing its own federal wing to run candidates in Quebec federal elections parallel to NDP candidates elsewhere. Once founded, the party would immediately draw strength from the organizational framework already existing in the unions and the NDP, and would be in a position to capitalize on the mounting ferment and militancy in Quebec to pose a powerful alternative to capitalist rule in Quebec City.

The revolutionary socialists organized in the Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière/League for Socialist Action have been among the first and most consistent promoters of a Quebec labor party. Through its journal, *La Lutte Ouvrière*, the LSO, united in a pan-Canadian organization with the LSA, has called for an open conference of the two great labor federations, QFL and CNTU, along with the students union (UGEQ), the union of small farmers (UCC), the New Democratic Party, the socialist organizations and others to found this party and set it on the road to power — a call which was taken up, if not yet carried out, by the QFL congress.

Even though the orientation of the trade union and NDP leadership will play initially a leading role in the formation of this labor party, it is by no means predetermined that the party will be reformist. On the contrary the conditions surrounding its creation are of such a character as to assure that it has every possibility of developing in a totally different direction. The party will be decisively shaped by the objective situation of the working class, which cries out for revolutionary solutions. It will be created in a period not of retreat but of militant advance of the working class. It will reflect a class struggle rendered more explosive by the national oppression, the super exploitation of Quebec workers. It will not be burdened with the tradition of reformism and with the weight of past defeats which weigh on working class parties in many countries. It will draw to it all the political tendencies of the labor and student movement, and can offer a wide field for revolutionists to put forward their program.

There is every possibility that the party will reject the reformist course and set out in a revolutionary direction. It can be won to a program of revolutionary transitional demands, which lead the working class in struggle from today's consciousness to an understanding of the need for a socialist society, and to the struggle to realize it. Rather than being confined to the parliamentary mould, it can be a broad activist movement, campaigning in all arenas through all forms of action necessary to promote the welfare of the working class. It can campaign around a developed program of profoundly revolutionary demands such as the sliding scale of hours and wages, adequate salaries for students, opening the books of the monopolies. While supporting national demands coming out of the daily struggles of the Québécois like the right to work in one's native language and the need for wage parity with Ontario, it can raise the necessity of ending the stranglehold of foreign capital, which stands behind the national oppression of Quebec, by nationalization of the foreign monopolies. In international policy, it would find a natural tendency to identify itself with the anti-colonialist struggles around the world, and could mobilize mass opposition to the policies of U.S. imperialism revealed so clearly in Vietnam.

The Socialist Vanguard

Where will the forces come from to win the labor party, and the working class as a whole, to such a revolutionary program? The militancy and the rich possibilities for socialism in Quebec today contrast strikingly with the weakness of most of the existing socialist organizations, and their lack

of a living orientation to the working class. The Communist Party of Quebec, for example, is totally incapable and unwilling to provide such a revolutionary socialist alternative. Pursuing its policy of peaceful coexistence, it has in fact given up the perspective of struggle for the socialist transformation of Quebec, and survives as a feeble rump without influence in the workers movement. While calling for a labor party in Quebec, the CP opposes its adoption of a socialist program—rather it advocates that the party limit itself to a minimum program to facilitate a bloc with petty-bourgeois political forces. This group, that recognizes in words the right of Quebec to self-determination but remains silent on the policy of Russification of the Ukraine pursued by the Soviet bureaucracy, that shamelessly attacks the symbol of the Latin American revolution, Che Guevara, and apologizes for the counter-revolutionary policy now being conducted by the Communist Party of France, has already been tested and by-passed by events.

The terrorist current generally identified with the Front de Libération Québécois (Quebec Liberation Front) has played a dramatic, if diversionary role in the development of the Quebec left. While its partisans have displayed courage and great willingness to sacrifice for the revolution, their actions were foredoomed to failure. The Quebec working class is not waiting for the clarion call to revolutionary action from outside but searching out a leadership that sinks deep roots into the class, that goes through the experiences of the class, and that throws up new leaders from the class in the process of these experiences.

Several socialist independentist tendencies have emerged in recent years from the broader independentist movement—the Mouvement de Libération Populaire (Peoples' Liberation Movement), the Jeunesse Socialiste du Québec (Quebec Socialist Youth) the Front de Libération Populaire (Peoples' Liberation Front), the Comité de Coordination Indépendance-Socialisme (Independence-Socialism Coordinating Committee) etc. These organizations share a revolutionary perspective, emphasizing that political independence is part of the process of national and social liberation. They solidarize with the heroic struggle of colonial peoples against imperialism, they seek a socialist transformation of Quebec, sometimes showing some understanding that the working class is the motor force of this transformation.

To realize their revolutionary aspirations, these vanguard elements must orient their ideas and their slogans towards the daily struggle of the workers, through a program of transitional demands. In general they have failed to do this, have failed to develop a trade union program, substituting the slogan of political independence of Quebec as the fundamental slogan, sometimes even as the precondition for struggle. These independentists have not grasped the need to build a labor party, in the concrete conditions of Quebec, as a transitional step towards the revolutionary transformation that they strive for. Despite their instability and frequent collapse, these groups represent an important tendency in the process of formation, education and organization of the revolutionary socialist leadership in Quebec, from which individuals and entire groups can be won to a revolutionary socialist program and organization. In contrast to such tendencies, the Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière stands firmly on the developed program and long experience of Marxism-Leninism and its current expression, Trotskyism. As part of a united Canada-wide organization, the LSO/LSA, it gains strength from the united resources and experience of revolutionaries joined in a common struggle around a common program. Its close fraternal association with the Fourth International provides the international outlook needed to develop the program for a socialist Canada.

If the Quebec labor party reflects the revolutionary possibilities inherent in the society that gives it birth, it will nonetheless take the action of the conscious revolutionary socialists to meet the challenge of winning the party to a revolutionary program and orientation. The Ligue Socialiste

Ouvrière, armed with the program and with the nucleus of forces required, is determined not to fail in this essential task.

"... (The) subordination of belated national revolutions to the revolution of the proletariat follows a law which is valid throughout the world. Whereas in the nineteenth century the fundamental problem of wars and revolutions was still to guarantee a national market to the productive forces, the problem of our century is to free the productive forces from the national boundaries which have become iron fetters upon them. In the broad historic sense the national revolutions of the East are only stages of the world revolution of the proletariat, just as the national movements of Russia became stepping stones to the soviet dictatorship.

. . . The bourgeoisie of backward countries from the days of its milk teeth grows up as an agency of foreign capital, and notwithstanding its envious hatred of foreign capital, always does and always will in every decisive situation turn up in the same camp with it. . . The upper circles of the petty-bourgeoisie, including the intelligentsia, may take an active and occasionally a very noisy part in the national struggles, but they are totally incapable of playing an independent role. Only the working class standing at the head of the nation can carry either a national or an agrarian revolution clear through."

Leon Trotsky, History of the Russian Revolution, vol. III, pp. 55-56.